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WHA Applauds Committee Approval of Telehealth Improvement Bill *WHA-Supported Legislation Will Increase Access to Care; States Have Seen Cost Savings*

The Wisconsin Hospital Association praised this afternoon's action by the Assembly Committee on Medicaid Reform and Oversight overwhelmingly approving WHA-supported legislation that will modernize state statutes related to the growing area of telehealth. Assembly Bill 410, with 65 bipartisan sponsors in both houses, passed the committee this afternoon on a unanimous 7-0 vote.

"This bill is important in ensuring that the state's Medicaid statutes keep pace with this growing area of health care," said Eric Borgerding, WHA president and CEO. "It's gratifying to see such broad bipartisan commitment for a proposal that can substantially increase access to our state's high-quality care in a cost-effective way."

Telehealth is rapidly becoming a staple of the nation's health care system. A study released just yesterday from Stanford Medicine's Center for Digital Health and Rock Health found that 1 in 4 patients surveyed nationwide used some version of live telehealth in the last 12 months. Numerous studies, including Wisconsin's own state employee health insurance program, have determined that creating access to care through telehealth is cost-neutral or results in cost-savings.

The legislation is the culmination of three years of work by WHA's Telemedicine Work Group, and includes the four recommendations regarding how the state's Medicaid program should cover telehealth services:

- Reimburse telehealth the same as in-person care when the quality of the care provided is functionally equivalent.
- Catch up to Medicare in the number of telehealth-related services that are covered.
- Cover in-home or community telehealth services.
- Increase access to behavioral health via telehealth.

Companion legislation in the State Senate, SB 380, received unanimous approval last week in the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Both bills are now eligible for full floor votes in their respective legislative houses.